

## THE PARTNERSHIP OF WOOD AND WATER.

(By DR. HANS BURGER, Swiss Forest Institute, contributed to  
*American Forests.*)

### FOREWORD BY HON. SECRETARY.

*The following article contributed by Dr. Hans Burger, Swiss Forest Institute, to "American Forests," is particularly applicable in that New Zealand is a hilly and mountainous country similar to Switzerland. No part of this southern land is far removed from the sea, which runs to great depths in close proximity to our coasts, thus the all-too-meagre top soil, when washed off owing to forest depletion and over-grazing, is finally deposited under the ocean and does not form additional coastal land to any extent.*

Historians and geographers teach us that the ancient cultivated countries on the Mediterranean were far more fruitful when their hills and mountains were still covered with vigorous forests. The quickly increasing population of those days, however, mercilessly destroyed the forest in order to increase the area of the cultivated land and to obtain wood for houses and ships in the easiest possible manner.

Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Asia Minor and parts of Northern Africa, which in earlier times seem to have been paradises of fruitfulness, are now partially laid waste. Canaan, the land that flowed with milk and honey, is to-day an arid and desert district. Of the cedar forests of Lebanon, with whose wood Solomon built the temple, there are now only sparse remnants.

The forests in all these countries have, to a large extent, disappeared. Mountains and hills are covered chiefly with poor pasture land, whose hardened surface does not allow the precious rain to penetrate into the soil. In the rainy seasons mountain brooks and rivers become swollen torrents, carve out deep river beds, cause landslides, harmful floods and cataracts of stones and boulders. Little water enters the soil, almost all flows away on the surface and soon after the rainfall the river beds have turned to arid deserts and the few springs are sealed up.

Even the ancient investigators, with real feeling for nature, established through observation that these changes in climate, this desolation of districts and countries which had earlier been paradisiacally fruitful, these extremes of drought and flood, could only be the result of the reckless destruction of the forests.